

**DCSS P3 PROJECT  
CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES FORMS WORKGROUP  
OCTOBER 17, 2000  
MEETING SUMMARY**

**A. GENERAL**

On Tuesday, October 17, 2000, the California Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) Policies, Procedures, and Practices (P3) Project, Child Support Services Forms Workgroup, held its sixth official session in Sacramento. The following members attended:

- ☒ Bill Kirk, State Co-Leader (DCSS Data Manager)
- ☒ Pat Ratty, County Co-Leader & Small County Rep (Paralegal--Placer)
- ☒ Pamela Crandall, County Analyst (FSO Supervisor---Sonoma)
- ☐ Rita Carroll, State Analyst (DCSS System Standards Analyst)
- ☒ Kristy Johnson, State Analyst (DCSS System Standards Analyst)
- ☒ Ruth Franklin, Medium County Rep (Management Analyst---Santa Clara)
- ☒ Deborah Potter, Large County Rep (Analyst--Fresno)
- ☐ Robert McLeod, Advocate Rep (ACES---Legal Research)
- ☒ Jenny Skoble, Advocate Rep (Harriett Buhai Ctr---Staff Attorney)
- ☐ Ed Kent, FTB Rep (CCSAS Child Support Specialist)
- ☒ Lynn Johnson, FTB Rep (CCSAS Info Systems Analyst)
- ☐ Judi Bentzien, FTB Rep (CCSAS Child Support Specialist)
- ☒ Kathleen Cullen, Judicial Council (County Clerk---Orange)
- ☒ Kristen Hoadley, Judicial Council (San Francisco)

Attending *ex officio* were:

- ☒ Julie Hopkins, Facilitator (SRA International)
- ☐ Kathie Lalonde, Facilitator (SRA International)
- ☐ Pat Pianko, Resource (OCSE Rep---Region 9)
- ☐ John Schambre, Resource (OCSE Rep---Region 9)
- ☐ Nancy Bienia, Resource (OCSE Rep---DC)

This meeting summary highlights points covered, material discussed, decisions made, and follow-up tasks for forthcoming sessions. Comments and corrections should be addressed to Julie Hopkins at [julie.hopkins@dss.ca.gov](mailto:julie.hopkins@dss.ca.gov).

**B. REVIEW OF LAST MEETING'S MINUTES**

No review of the last meeting's minutes was necessary, as the Workgroup finalized its Short Report and began work on the long (Draft Final) report in that session. Members of the group had received copies of each.

## **C. TODAY'S TENTATIVE AGENDA**

- California Family Support Conference Report/Comments
- Review Intermediate Work Product
- Develop Draft Final Report
- Next Steps
- Cost/Benefit Evaluation
- Forum Questions and Answers

## **D. CALIFORNIA FAMILY SUPPORT CONFERENCE REPORT/COMMENTS**

Julie opened the session with a discussion of the group's presentation at the California Family Support Conference in San Luis Obispo. Both Ruth and Pam did a superb job in presenting the group's recommendations and answering questions raised by the attendees. The presentation was well-received.

There was one question that perhaps should be incorporated into our report. The participant questioned whether there would be an emergency or expedited process by which counties could approve urgently needed forms without going through the FMU formal process. The group agreed that an expedited process was needed and that the information should be included in the Draft Final Report.

## **E. DEVELOP DRAFT FINAL REPORT**

Julie advised the group of the schedule for submission and review of its Draft Final Report:

- 10/17 Develop final recommendations
- 10/19 Peer review by workgroups
- 10/23 SRA review
- 10/24 Final Draft Report due
- 10/26 Edit Final Draft Report
- 10/31 QA Final Draft Report
- 11/02 Update Final Draft Report
- 11/06 Deliver Final Draft Report

## **Peer Reviewers and Volunteers for Follow-on Work**

She requested volunteers to serve as peer reviewers. These individuals will be responsible for reviewing the Final Draft Report to ensure that it reflects the group's discussions and recommendations. Debbi Potter, Pam Crandall, and Kristy Johnson volunteered. The report will be emailed to all group members on Wednesday, October 18, and comments will be due by close of business on Friday, October 20.

There is also a need for some members of the group to serve as workgroup resources to the DCSS as it implements recommendations. They will answer questions and provide information on topics related to their workgroups. It is possible that their participation will

be needed for as long as two years. Several members of the group volunteered for these roles: Jennie Skoble, Ruth Franklin, Patty Ratty, Lynn Johnson, Kristen Hoadle, and Kristy Johnson

### **Workgroup Edits/Changes**

The group reviewed the Intermediate Work Product and compared it with the original draft that had been submitted. They agreed that the intermediate report did reflect the group's recommendations and could be used from that point forward. Several members of the group had changes to the report, as outlined below.

The group wanted to be sure to include the draft recommendation flow-chart for the Forms Development and Approval Process. The group did a lot of work on this process flow-chart, and it needs to be added to our report. In addition, the group wants to make sure that it is used as a basis for developing the process and is attached to the Final Draft Report. It will be incorporated into an appendix.

#### *Elements of an Ideal Form*

- Add court case number
- Add LCSA case number and requestor I.D. to the bottom right-hand corner of forms
- Add name of child, if applicable

#### *Other Changes*

- FC sections – remove the “dash”, change to correct code section in the recommendations.
- Change last sentence under Issue 3, first paragraph after the bullets: “ ... and the California Family Law Code sections codifying SB542 and AB 196.”
- Attach copy of the *Turner v. McMahon* recommendations. Discussion: how much of it to attach? We agreed to insert the whole thing as an appendix. Kathleen Cullen will re-type it and forward it to Julie. We will insert it under paragraph after the three bullets on page 7. Julie will “bulletize” the materials we reviewed.
- Underline *Turner v McMahon* where it appears; delete words “consent decree” and change “recommendations” to “requirements.”

#### *Issue 1*

- Page 4, ¶ 1: Change wording to “California FC section 17306(b) requires development of uniform statewide forms. Due to time constraints of the P3 process and the complexity of the child support system in California...”

- Page 4, ¶ 2, beginning with “because” on page 5: Cross off “because” and put a period at end of “automated system.” Change second sentence to: “In discussing staffing levels for a DCSS Forms Management Unit (FMU)....”
- Page 5, ¶ 2: Delete words “feels that it” from the first sentence.
- Page 5, ¶ 3, last sentence on page 5: clarify the pay-off by adding the following bullets:
  - Effective case processing
  - Improved communication among child support stakeholders
  - Customer service and satisfaction

### *Issue 3*

- Page 7, first bullet: change to read “(different formats, inaccurate and inadequate information...”
- Page 7, second paragraph following bullets: There was a lot of discussion here about who “other parties” are. The group referred to the customer list developed in a prior meeting, and agreed to delete references to case members, other parties, etc. and call them all “customers.”

### *Issue 4*

- Page 10, last paragraph: Add heading RECOMMENDATION before last paragraph.

## **DCSS Comments/Review**

Upon concluding discussion of their own changes to the report, the group moved on to review the comments that the DCSS Management Team had made on the Intermediate Work Product.

### *Issue 1*

- Page 4, last paragraph: There was a great deal of discussion about the wording for budgeting funds for the FMU. Although DCSS does not control the state budget, it does control its requests for funding in specific areas. The group discussed how to word this paragraph to make it clear that DCSS needs to have funding for the FMU. Final language: “...it is critical that there be adequate funding for staffing and support. Therefore the DCSS should request funding....” Eliminate passive wording.
- Page 4, last sentence: Change to: “This includes providing additional resources to handle...”
- The group discussed the staffing requirements for the FMU. The group agreed that the report should not designate specific positions; however, the group felt it important to provide an estimation of an adequate number of staff to accomplish the monumental task

of implementing and managing standard forms throughout California. It was agreed that there needs to be at least seven (7) analysts to accomplish this task. The staffing recommendation will remain as a “Next Step.”

- Page 5, first full paragraph: The DCSS Management Team commented that they agree with the concept, but are not sure the recommendation will go into regulation. After some discussion, we agreed to change the wording to: “The group recommends the establishment....”
- Page 5, ¶ 2, last sentence: Delete “additional” and use “adequate”. Agreed.
- Page 5, ¶ 3, last sentence: The term “high cost,” as used here, is rather vague. The group had discussed this earlier, and decided to delete the word “high.” There was some discussion regarding determining costs of some of these initiatives. The point was made that, particularly in the staffing area, it may be possible for DCSS or the counties to reassign resources, thus limiting the costs involved. The wording in the last sentence was changed from “high payoff” to “substantial benefit.”

## *Issue 2*

The group spent a great deal of time discussing this section. The DCSS Management Team had many comments in this area; upon further review by the group, we agreed that the section was rather confusing.

It was agreed that the group needed to define “standardized forms.” There will be exceptions to this, and we need to speak to these exceptions. County representatives felt very strongly that the counties should have the authority to develop internal forms that expedite their business processes. The internal forms would not be incorporated into the statewide system, although it may be possible for them to be shared with other counties, to expedite those counties’ processes as well.

The group discussed the forms approval process, i.e., what do we really mean when we state that some forms can be modified without department approval? The group appeared to be clear on what the process is, however, the process description is not clear in the report. It was agreed that this section of the report should be rewritten, with more explanation and less reliance on bulleting. Julie advised that she will try to get us some more time so that we can do an adequate job rewriting these recommendations. Lynn, Kristy, and Patty will work on rewriting this portion of the report. Pam and Debbi will participate via email. We need to define the places where we cannot be “standard” but where we need some flexibility. We need to keep the working relationships we have with other intra-county agencies and need to be able to use these kinds of forms.

### *Issue 3*

- Reword the first two paragraphs for clarity and better flow: Move the first paragraph to below the bullets and change it to read: “Forms should be created that are understandable and easy to fill out, and that will facilitate communication between stakeholders....”
- Page 8: Change fourth bullet under “Recommendations” to “Available in multiple languages”
- Elements of an Ideal Form: Add “where applicable” to the business letter format bullet.

During the review of this section, the group discussed whether it was clear in the report what child support services forms the group was addressing. Did it include only county forms or would this apply to the states as well? The group felt it was not clear; Kristy agreed to draft a definition of a FORM. It will be added to page 2, THE PROCESS.

### *Issue 4*

The group considered that this recommendation was beyond the purview of this workgroup. We reviewed our discussions in this area and realized that we want the child support advocate to have input into the forms process, but we haven’t really defined the position.

What is the difference between an ombudsman and an advocate? We modeled this position on the FTB Taxpayers Advocate. This person doesn’t answer to the board or the department and would review forms from the advocate perspective. Advocate is truly an advocate of the customers. This position was very important to the workgroup members who represented the advocacy groups. There was a great deal of discussion of the ombudsperson, and the possibility/probability that the child support advocate functions could be performed by the ombudsperson. We did feel that the advocate should be at the state level, and should also be available for complaint resolution. The group felt that there should be a state ombudsperson who could perhaps fulfill the role we have outlined for the child support advocate; in addition, he/she could serve as point person for the complaint resolution and fair hearings process implementation. There was a discussion about the difference between an advocate and an ombudsman. Ombudsman is for solving problems. Advocate looks out for the interests of customers. We wanted a direct contact for outside agencies regarding forms issues and problems.

The group discussed deleting this recommendation from the report, or perhaps moving it to the “Next Steps” section. We felt strongly that it should remain a workgroup recommendation, regardless of whether it fell outside of our purview. It was agreed that the section needed clarification; Lynn, Patty, and Kristy agreed to redraft this section of the report as well.

The group agreed to meet one more time next week to go over the final report in its entirety, with all the rewrites and additions as discussed in these minutes. The meeting will be on Tuesday, October 24, at 9:00 a.m. in Rancho Cordova.

## **F. COST/BENEFIT EVALUATION**

The group reviewed its recommendations, and attached a cost and benefit evaluation to each. We also identified approximate timeframes for implementation of the recommendations. This information will be incorporated into the Draft Final Report.

## **G. FORUM QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

We did not have sufficient time to address these. Kristy agreed to make an effort to draft responses; the group will review them in our meeting on October 24.

## **H. CROSS-WORKGROUP ISSUES**

None identified.

## **I. SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS**

None identified

## **J. HANDOUTS**

- Workgroup Draft Final Report
- Intermediate Work Product
- Draft Final Report Schedule
- Forum Questions and Answers

## **K. ACTION ITEMS/HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT SESSION**

See attached listing.

## **L. ATTACHMENTS**

Action Item List.

## **M. TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR SESSION 7**

- Review/finalize Draft Final Report
- Review/finalize answers to forum questions